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Secretary of Natural Resources



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May 11, 2009

Kate Rudacille
Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority
5400 Ox Road
Fairfax Station, VA 22039



Re: Whites Ford Park

Dear Kate,

Thank you for the opportunity to survey for the globally rare Wisconsin Snaketail dragonfly (*Ophiogomphus susbehcha*) at the proposed Whites Ford Park property along the Potomac River northeast of Leesburg in Loudoun County. During my visit on May 1, 2009, I surveyed for this species along nearly the entire length (about 0.6 miles) of the river shoreline (except for a few very steep sections) that is contained within the property boundary. Although weather conditions during most of the day were not favorable for adult dragonfly activity, the shoreline was surveyed rather thoroughly for the presence of dragonfly exuviae (shed larval skins). This has proven to be an effective survey method for documenting the distribution of the Wisconsin Snaketail dragonfly along the James River in Virginia. No evidence of the Wisconsin Snaketail was found at the Whites Ford Park property, although the habitat may be suitable. This species has been documented only once (2002) from the Potomac River, at a site several miles farther upstream.

Recent floodwaters may have displaced dragonfly exuviae (from the spring 2009 emergence) that were formerly present on and near the shoreline, but I found little to no evidence of exuviae in flood debris or higher up the bank. In general, the number of exuviae present along this stretch of the Potomac River was very low. I found a total of only 9 exuviae and 1 live nymph (which had recently crawled out of the river and later emerged as an adult within the next hour) of a common dragonfly, the Ashy Clubtail (*Gomphus lividus*), during the survey. When the skies cleared later in the afternoon, I captured adults of two additional dragonfly species, Springtime Darner (*Basiaeschna janata*) and Spine-crowned Clubtail (*Gomphus abbreviatus*), at the southern edge of the fallow fields bordering the riparian forest. The latter species was represented by one fresh adult female, which had likely emerged from the river within the

Re: Whites Ford Park

previous 24 hours. Due to the discovery of several new populations of the Spine-crowned Clubtail in Virginia in 2008, this species was recently removed from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's rare animal list and placed on our informal watchlist. However, the Spine-crowned Clubtail is still considered to be very rare in Maryland. The adult found at Whites Ford Park is only the fourth known record for this species from the Potomac River. The capture location is marked on the enclosed map.

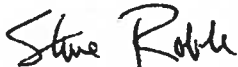
In my professional opinion, the proposed boat ramp is not likely to impact the habitat of any rare dragonflies, particularly if it is not used by large motorized boats that are capable of creating significant wakes which can potentially impact emerging adults. It appears that the shallow depths of this section of the river will preclude such large boats. Maintaining the narrow strip of riparian forest within the park to the fullest extent possible is recommended. Among various other species, Prothonotary Warblers were particularly common in this habitat. Garlic mustard, an invasive, exotic plant, was also extremely abundant in the riparian strip and has displaced native spring wildflowers such as Virginia bluebells and violets; very few stems of either of these species were noted. Consideration should be given to controlling the continued spread of this species on the park property.

The attached species list is a summary of the fauna that I recorded during my visit. In addition, many mayflies (Ephemeroptera) and caddisflies (Trichoptera) had recently emerged from the river, and stonefly (Plecoptera) exuviae and adults (few) were noted..

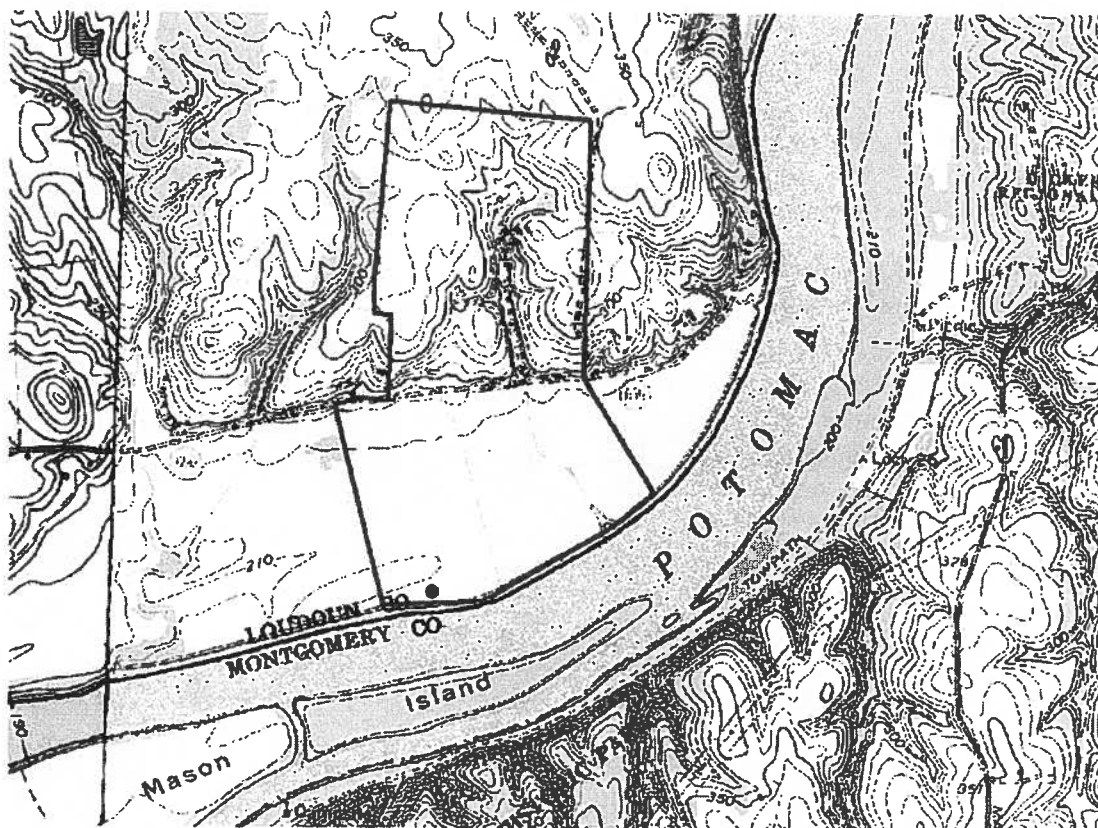
Thank you again for the opportunity to survey this property. An invoice in the amount of \$770.00 is enclosed for services rendered.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this survey.

Sincerely,



Steven M. Roble, Ph.D.
Staff Zoologist
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Approximate location (dot) where a teneral adult female Spine-crowned Clubtail (*Gomphus abbreviatus*) was captured on 1 May 2009 at the proposed Whites Ford Park (approximate boundary in purple), Loudoun County, Virginia.

Whites Ford Park, Loudoun County, Virginia

Animal species recorded on May 1, 2009

by

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Dragonflies (3)

Springtime Darner (*Basiaeschna janata*)
Spine-crowned Clubtail
(*Gomphus abbreviatus*)
Ashy Clubtail (*Gomphus lividus*)

Butterflies (6)

Spicebush Swallowtail
Zebra Swallowtail
Cabbage White
Eastern Tailed-Blue
American Lady
Silver-spotted Skipper

Mussels and clams (3)

Eastern Elliptio (*Elliptio complanata*)
Lampmussel (*Lampsilis* sp.)
Asian Clam (*Corbicula fluminea*)

Amphibians (4)

American Toad
Spring Peeper
Eastern Gray Treefrog
Pickerel Frog

Birds (44)

Double-crested Cormorant
Great Blue Heron
Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Mallard
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Bald Eagle
Red-shouldered Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk

Birds (continued)

Killdeer
Spotted Sandpiper
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Barred Owl
Chimney Swift
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
Purple Martin
Blue Jay
American Crow
Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
White-breasted Nuthatch
Carolina Wren
House Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Wood Thrush
Northern Mockingbird
Cedar Waxwing
Warbling Vireo
Prothonotary Warbler
Louisiana Waterthrush
Common Yellowthroat
Northern Cardinal
Indigo Bunting
Field Sparrow
Grasshopper Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Brown-headed Cowbird
Red-winged Blackbird
American Goldfinch

Mammals (3)

Eastern Cottontail
Raccoon
White-tailed Deer